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ABSTRACT

Perspectives on developing an environmental ideology by approaching environmental issues holistically are offered in this paper. The role of music and art in environmental education is viewed as being critical in fostering a deep sense of appreciation and stewardship towards the environment. Suggestions are presented for teaching art and music environmentally. Explanations are given on how music and art can assist students in developing ecology-related aesthetic values. Integration of all content areas, especially the aesthetic subjects is advocated and advised. (ML)

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Art and Music: The Essential Aesthetic Components of Holistic Environmental Education

by

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A review on the recent literature on environmental education (Bybee et al., 1980; Hawaii State Dept. of Education, 1981; Kauppinen, 1980; McInnis, 1982; Stanley, 1979; Stapp, 1978) identifies the need to incorporate environmental education, in a more holistic sense, into the K-12 curriculum. In the fall of 1985 environmental educators throughout North America as well as representatives from India, Australia, New Zealand, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom met at the fourteenth annual conference of the North American Association for Environmental Education to discuss the central role environmental education plays in the realization of a sustainable future. In terms of curriculum and instruction there was a consensus that we, as educators, should work to incorporate environmental education into every subject in the curriculum so as to promote holistic environmental attitudes in society.

During the 1960s and 1970s, environmental education had been introduced primarily in the subjects of science or social studies, often as an isolated unit or week-long experience at an outdoor centre. Such disjointed environmental curricula have fostered a one-sided approach to environmental issues (Sale and Lee, 1972; Swanson, 1975).

This segmented educational approach seems to reflect the way society has traditionally tried to solve crucial environmental issues (Cotgrove, 1982; Miller, 1982). Often a purely scientific or humanistic solution is proposed. Unfortunately, such segmented approaches do not recognize the

interrelated aspects of the biosphere. Problems have been defined too narrowly in time and space, simple solutions are sought for complex problems, and negative trade-offs of solutions are not considered (Bybee, 1979a).

In order for society to come to terms with environmental degradation, people must recognize its various interacting parts and develop a sense and concern for the system as a whole. It is not adequate for people to be, simply, environmentally 'aware'. Society must develop attitudes and behaviours that approach environmental issues from a holistic perspective.

As educators we can further this holistic environmental ideology by <u>teaching</u> environmental education from a holistic perspective. This means that environmental education will be taught not only through social studies and science, but also through mathematics, language arts, health, physical education, art and music. In the words of McInnis (1982, p.210) "Environmental education is an attempt to bring together our fragmentary, disciplinary mode of thinking".

Too often the aesthetic subjects are neglected in environmental education. Yet it is precisely these subjects that play a fundamental role in the development of a holistic attitude. By incorporating environmental education into music and art, a deep sense of appreciation and stewardship towards the environment can be fostered.

Art as Part of a Holistic Environmental Curriculum

Art lends itself extremely well to environmental education in that it helps students become more aware of their environment through their personal expressions. It also integrates well with other subjects, thereby promoting a holistic environmental ideology.

One of art education's most important contributions to an environmental curriculum is that it can offset the negativism often associated with environmental education by developing in students the power to shape and enjoy beauty. In environmental studies, the emphasis in art education is towards the development of aesthetic awareness and an expression of thought and feeling.

Since specific topics are often governed by student interests, and activities experienced in the classroom, school and community (N.B. Dept. of Education, 1979), a teacher who involves students in environmental education through other subjects will find numerous opportunities to integrate art so as to further environmental learning.

There are, however, a number of specific ways in which art can make a unique contribution to students' experiences. Kauppinen (1980) describes how Finland is encouraging the expression of environmental attitudes and values. Since most people live in town and cities, environmental education in Finland has incorporated the built environment, the social, and the psychological environment into the art curriculum.

The intent is to bring the affective and aesthetic aspects of environmental education to the forefront. To facilitate these objectives, teachers have students visit a place, and interpret it by becoming familiar with it through the use of all their senses. Students are also encouraged to depict the sense of a place, examine the character of a place, depict a place with a certain feeling, illustrate human relationships, and compose a work relating past and present (Kauppinen, 1980).

These activities help students develop deeper feelings about their environment, increase their knowledge, and provide them with the skills needed to describe and express their environmental perceptions. Any form of expression may be used whether it be drawing, painting, photography, graphics, mobiles, sculpture, weaving or collages. What is needed is interest on the part of the classroom teacher. Teaching art environmentally does not demand the expertise of an art specialist. The strength of these activities comes from the ease with which they integrate with other activities and the value of their learning in relation to art and the environment.

Music as Part of a Holistic Environmental Curriculum

Similarly, the music curriculum can help further a holistic environmental perspective, while at the same time enhance and broaden its application. In order to extend the learning of the music curriculum (that typically uses

man-made instruments exclusively, with the exception of the voice), the environmental music program adds the environment as a resource. Activities such as listening walks encourage students to notice sounds they had unconsciously ignored in the past, and to classify and discuss them. Sounds may range from clanging garbage cans to hillside echos. Discrimination between man-made and natural sounds can lead to discussions of what sounds are either threatening or threatened in the future.

The environment may also be used to facilitate thoughts that can be put into lyrics and then put to music. Such music may come from common tunes, be created by students on simple instruments, or by using sounds in the environment. Masyaa and Van Alstine (1974) recognized the role the environment can play in the expression of thought and inspiration of music in stating,

> With some practice in good listening to the loud and subtle, man-made and natural sounds in the environment, children can use their ears to write effective expressions of their ecological ideas and set them to music (p.66).

As well as using the environment to encourage musical expression, the curriculum can use music to help develop in students ecology-related aesthetic values. Songs reflect our society and, therefore, can be used in many ways to integrate and introduce subject matter. Work songs can be related to energy industries, and ecology songs can promote environmentalism whether the lyrics are written by a composer

or by the students. Songs can also be used to practice singing and promote environmental appreciation and/or they can be used for a discussion of an environmental issue.

A teacher can use a song to initiate work in other subjects while enhancing listening, reacting, conceptualizing, and interpreting. While listening to a song that depicts a scene of beauty students can draw what they hear. Having completed their pictures the students can then listen to some cluttered music and add to their picture. The discussion that follows can lead to some interesting perceptions and further environmental inquiries into topics such as pollution. Other experiences with music or sounds of the urban or rural environment can lead to compositions or poems in language arts, science inquiries, social studies, art, or any other possible subject. Once again, an environmental approach can open the door to integration and the development of a holistic environmental ideology.

Conclusion

By picking up on some of the above suggestions for environmental art and music education, teachers can move environmental education beyond its segmented, one-sided position in the school curriculum. In taking this first-step to emphasize the aesthetics and integrate all subjects through environmental education, educators will be helping future generations approach issues of environmental degradation with a more realistic, holistic ideology.

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